

Wee Words (Glossary)

Compost: a waste management process that creates an optimal environment for decomposition by layering organic wastes like food scraps and grass clippings so they will decay into fertile humus.

Consumers: people who use up or expend goods, such as food, electronics, textiles and other products.

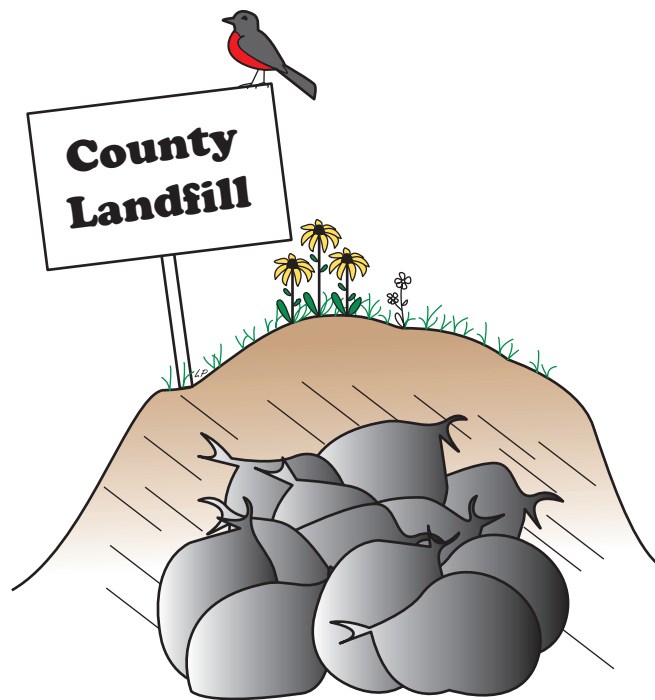
Decompose: to break down into component parts or basic elements; to rot. Decomposition is an organic process necessary for the continuation of life since it makes essential nutrients available for use by plants and animals.

Decomposer: a plant or animal that feeds on dead material and causes it to break down or decompose. Examples include fungi, lichens, earthworms, insects and bacteria.

Disposable: usually made for one-time use, or limited usage before disposal. (e.g., disposable paper cups, diapers)

Energy recovery: the generation of energy by burning solid waste.

Garbage: spoiled or waste food that is thrown away. Generally defined as wet food waste and excludes dry material (trash). The term is often used interchangeably with the word "trash."



Hazardous wastes: materials with toxins that can cause special problems for living organisms or the environment because they are poisonous, explosive, burn or dissolve flesh or metal, ignite easily with or without a flame, or carry disease.

Humus: organic material consisting of decayed vegetable matter that provides nutrients for plants and increases the ability of the soil to retain water.

Industrial waste: the waste that industries (e.g., power plants and paper mills) generate as they produce the products we use.

Landfill: a site for the controlled burial of solid waste.

Leachate: liquid that has percolated through solid waste and/or been generated by solid waste decomposition, and contains extracted, dissolved or suspended materials. May contaminate ground or surface water.

Litter: waste materials discarded in an inappropriate place. Littering is illegal in Wisconsin.

Materials recovery facility: a facility designed to sort and transport recyclable materials such as paper, aluminum, glass and plastic to facilities where they will be reused.

Methane gas: a potent greenhouse gas, is a colorless, odorless, flammable and potentially dangerous, gaseous hydrocarbon (CH₄) present in natural gas and formed by the decomposition of organic matter. Can be used as a fuel.

Municipal solid waste: all solid, semi-solid, liquid and gaseous wastes; including trash, garbage, yard waste, ashes, commercial waste, and household discards such as appliances, furniture and equipment.

Natural resources: valuable, naturally occurring materials such as soil, wood, air, water, oil or minerals.

Nature's Recyclers:
see decomposer.



Nutrients: a substance with nutritive value that is necessary for growth of living things.

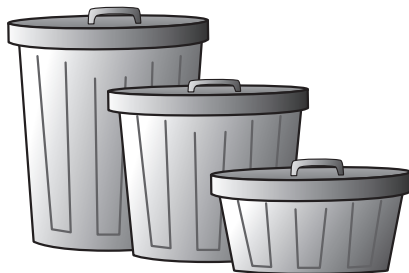
Open burning: the burning of any combustible material outdoors without any air pollution controls in place. Burning in an unconfined area, in a container or in a pile are all considered to be open burning. Open burning of garbage and recyclables is illegal in Wisconsin.

Organic: derived from living organisms.

Pollution: harmful substances deposited in the environment that can lead to a state of dirtiness, impurity or unhealthiness.

Recycle: the collection and reprocessing of manufactured materials for remanufacture, either in the same form or as part of a different product.

Recycled: to have been passed again through a series of changes or treatments in order to regain material for human use.



Reduce: to lessen in extent, amount, number or other quantity.

Responsible Unit (RU): A municipality, county, tribe, solid waste management system or other unit of local government that is responsible for planning, operating and funding a recycling program. Each RU in Wisconsin must develop and implement a recycling program for managing state mandated recyclables generated within its region.

Reuse: to extend the life of an item by using it again in some way. Possible ways to reuse an item include repairing it, modifying it or creating new uses for it.

Sanitary landfill: a specially engineered site for the disposal of solid waste on land. These landfills are constructed in a way that reduces hazards to health and safety.

Solid Waste: All solid and semi-solid wastes, including trash, garbage, yard waste, food scraps, ashes, industrial waste, demolition and construction waste and household discards such as appliances, furniture and equipment.



Solid waste management: the controlling, handling and disposal of all solid waste. One goal of solid waste management is to reduce waste to a minimum.

Source reduction: a reduction in the amount of, and/or toxicity of a waste before it enters the waste stream; also called waste prevention.

Toxins: a poisonous substance that is usually very unstable, or harmful when introduced into human, animal or plant tissue.

Trash: material considered worthless, unnecessary or offensive, that is usually thrown away. Trash is generally defined as dry material and excludes food waste (garbage) and ashes. However, the term is often used interchangeably with the word "garbage."

